

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State

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Chapter Five

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Reviewed by Jim West

Eshel begins 'In this chapter I will consider another scroll, 4Q448, which I believe is also associated with the war of Alexander Jannaeus against Ptolemy Lathyrus. ... This scroll is not sectarian in nature ... and it was brought to Qumran by one of the people who joined the sect' (p. 101). Since the fragment in question is comprised of 3 sections, Eshel takes each in turn, subjecting them to the same rigorous analysis that has been the hallmark of his work in this volume. 'Column A is a hymn in praise of God, while cols. B-C are a prayer for the welfare of King Jonathan' (p. 103), whom Eshel identifies with Jannaeus.

Eshel's examination provokes at a number of points. For instance, when he writes 'The author of the prayer has implied that the Kingdom of God is the kingdom of Jonathan' (p. 105), one can't help but wonder if 'kingdom of God' talk in the New Testament also may indicate a desire for the 'good old days' of the Hasmoneans. Perhaps, if Eshel is correct here, we may need to take another look at the meaning of 'Kingdom of God' on the lips of the Historical Jesus.

When Eshel turns to the other columns of the fragment, he draws a connection between the 'Prayer of Hezekiah' discovered in other Qumran texts and them. [As an aside, there's a typo on page 111 towards the bottom of the page where Eshel has 'probably' when he means 'probable'].

When all is said and done, Eshel writes 'I suggest that lines 5-10 in col. A of 4Q448 include a complete literary unity, attributed to Isaiah and Hezekiah based on 2 Chr 32:20' (p. 113). And 'It is my view that the *Prayer for the Welfare of King Jonathan* ended up on the same scroll alongside the prayer attributed to Hezekiah and Isaiah ... because of a link between Sennacherib's campaign ... and Ptolemy Lathyrus' invasion of Judea' (p. 113).

Whether or not, again, one agrees with Eshel's conclusions, he cannot be faulted for his logic. His argument is tightly woven, forbidding any sort of rending of the fabric.